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ABSTRACT

During the 1985-86 school year, Mt. Diablo High Schools (Concord, California) implemented a new attendance policy requiring that any student with 15 days of absence (including excused) would receive a failing grade. Since then, half of the district's six high schools have adopted alternative attendance programs. In 1990, Northgate and College Park High Schools adopted a policy failing a student after 7 days of unexcused absence per semester. Although the program has worked well at Northgate, numerous computer problems at College Park have made the program unpopular with staff and many parents. Whereas Northgate students' attendance improved with the program, absences at College Park increased when compared to prior years. The district as a whole has experienced minimal improvement in average attendance rate during the past 4 years. After reviewing the data from this and two earlier attendance policy evaluations, the following recommendations were made: (1) eliminate the 15-day policy; (2) adopt a new policy that does not penalize students for legal absences; (3) strengthen staff development in classroom strategies promoting attendance; (4) send a letter to truants of more than 4 days; (5) continue to improve the School Attendance Review Board; (6) review computer support prior to policy changes; and (7) urge all counselors to follow the district's comprehensive guidance program. Appendices contain a survey of school attendance policies; compulsory attendance rules and forms; a 1986 summary report on the 15-day policy; College Park and Northgate's attendance policies; the status of prior recommendations; and administrator, parent, and teacher opinion surveys. (MLH/Author)

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Mt. Diablo Unified School District

Final Evaluation of the 15-Day Attendance Policy

EA 023 147

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May, 1990

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE 15-DAY ATTENDANCE POLICY

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The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of several people. Frank Oliver gathered information, chaired meetings, and supported everyone in improving student attendance. Principals Joanne Hauklund and Ray Schultz were especially helpful. Vice Principals Gomer Arnold and Connie Benton graciously assisted with data collection and related administrative tasks. Finally, teachers Todd Samet and Larry Leavitt gave up class time for student interviews.

SUMMARY

During the 1985/86 year, Mt. Diablo High Schools implemented a new attendance policy. This required that any student with 15 days of absence (including excused) during a semester would receive a failing grade. Since this time, half of the district's six high schools have adopted alternative attendance programs. This year, Northgate and College Park High Schools fail a student after 7 days of unexcused absence per semester. This program has worked well at Northgate. At College Park, numerous computer problems have made the program unpopular with staff and many parents. After review of the data from this and two prior studies, the following recommendations were made:

1. Eliminate the 15-Day Policy.
2. Adopt a new Policy which does not penalize students for legal absences.
3. Strengthen staff development in classroom strategies which promote positive attendance.
4. All schools should send the 4-day truant letter.
5. Continue to improve the School Attendance Review Board.
6. Review computer support for next year prior to changing policy.
7. All counselors should follow the district's Comprehensive Guidance Program.

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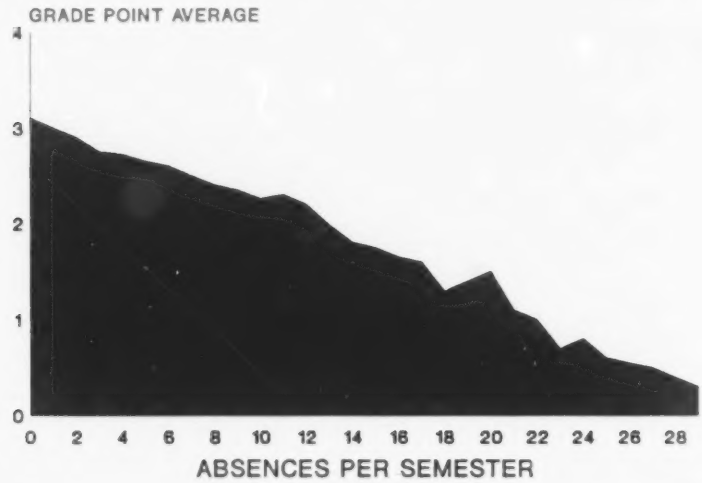
Introduction

Educators have long emphasized the importance of class attendance. Only in the classroom may the student hear the teacher's presentation, participate in class discussions, and enjoy of the benefits of spontaneous interactions between student and teacher. It comes as no surprise that surprise that students with high absence rates earn lower grades than students with better attendance. Fleming and Zafirau[1] found that "over three-fourths of school failure rates was explained by the attendance rate." Similarly, an analysis of student grades in the Mt. Diablo school district found a very strong relationship between achievement and attendance (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
POOR ATTENDANCE MEANS
LOW GRADES



To improve achievement, many districts have adopted policies calling for academic penalties for student absence. In February, 1989, a Mt. Diablo School District committee requested such policies from other California districts. A total of twelve districts reported using a variety of consequences for excessive absences (Appendix A). A survey of 547 Iowa school principals showed that 58% reduce grades for excessive absences[2]. In 1985, Texas adopted a rule that any student with five absences during a semester would not receive credit, subject to appeal Ligon[3].

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1. Fleming, M. and Zafirau, J., "Grading Issues in a Desegregated System," Presented at AERA, 1982

2. Bartlett, L. "Academic Evaluation and Student Discipline Don't Mix: A Critical Review," Journal of Law and Education, Vol. 16, 2, 155-165

3. Ligon, G. "A Failed Attendance Policy; 2,713,598 Excuses," Presented at AERA, 1990

Although there is some evidence that these programs are effective[4],[5] there are questions as to whether they are legal. In a review of recent cases, Bartlett6 concludes that school officials would be well advised to avoid "exacting academic retribution" for disciplinary infractions and nonattendance. Bartlett notes, however, that within the legal community "there is a division on the legality of such cases."

The 15-Day Policy

During the 1985/86 year, all high schools in the Mt. Diablo Unified School district implemented a new policy to improve student attendance. Beginning that year, any student who was absent for more than 15 days during a semester would receive a grade of "F" for that course. All absences were included except for school administrative appointments, school approved programs or projects, and special testing. The policy required that a letter indicating that the student was experiencing poor attendance would be sent to the parents following the seventh and ninth days of absence. On the fifteenth absence, the high school sent another letter notifying the parent of the "F" grade.

Along with the fifteen day letter, the school also informed the parent of the student's right to appeal the grade. On the appeal form the student wrote the reason for the request and how the missed work would be completed. The teacher indicated whether the appeal should be granted, and an administrator make the final decision. Students had five school days to appeal, and the school had ten days to render a decision. (See Appendix B for Board policy, rules, and letters.)

In June of 1986 a Board Goals Committee met to evaluate the success of the Fifteen-Day Attendance Policy after its first year of use (Appendix C). Their recommendations were:

1. The policy be continued during the 1986/87 school year.
2. Each school be provided $3,000 for clerical assistance for the extra work required to implement the policy.
3. Notification be made at the ninth and fifteenth day of absence rather than the present seventh, tenth, and fifteenth day policy. (Note: This was a rule, not a policy.)
4. The fifteen day letter and the appeal form be combined into one NCR triplicate letter.
5. The following statement be added to the form: No appeal shall be considered where five or more of the absences have been reported as truants.

Staff followed all of the recommendations except for number 2.

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3. Malbon, L. and Nuttall, R. "A Promising Approach to Absenteeism in the Secondary School," Phi Delta Kappan, Sept., 1982, 66-67

4. Giamundo, S. "Grading Attendance: Does It Reduce Absenteeism?" New York State Department of Education, 1981

5. Bartlett, L. op. cit.

Because of concerns about the 15-Day Policy, three Mt. Diablo high schools have tried alternative programs to improve student attendance. Clayton Valley High School piloted a program with no penalties for excessive absence during the 1987/88 school year. This program called for greater contact with parents through an increased number of phone calls and letters.

In the Fall of 1988, a committee met to develop a second alternative program (Appendix D). Northgate High School implemented the committee's plan during the second semester of the 1988/89 year. This project differed from the 15-Day Policy in the following ways:

1. Any student with seven truants in a class received a grade of "F" for that class. Prior policy issued an "F" after 15 days.

2. Legal absences are not counted in the 7 day absence total. Current policy counts all absences.

3. Letters to parents

   a. A warning letter was sent after the third day of absence in any class. The letter also reported all legal absences and tardies.

   b. When a student cut at least one period on four or more days, a letter declaring the student to be a truant was sent as required by State law. Most other schools do not issue this letter now.

   c. When the student misses seven periods for any class, a letter was sent indicating that the student will receive a grade of "F."

In addition, Northgate had several other attendance strategies. Their automated caller phoned the home of any student who had an unexcused absence for any course on the day after the absence. If a student cut a class on Monday, for example, the home would be called on Tuesday. Northgate also required that students clear all absences within 48 hours. Although it was not widely announced, a Vice Principal considered appeals of the 48-hour rule. To improve attendance by seniors, Northgate decided that it would not accept absences from 18 year old students unless the parent had given the student permission to write excuses.

A study of the Northgate program recommended that it be continued and expanded to another school. In August, 1989, College Park volunteered to pilot the program during the 1989/90 year.

About the Study

This is the third evaluation of Mt. Diablo's high school attendance policies. The first (June, 1988) studied the program at Clayton Valley High School. It made recommendations for improving attendance through changes in district policy and improved computer support. A committee reviewed the results of the first report and suggested an alternative program. The second study (August, 1989) reviewed the first semester of the alternative program at Northgate High School. Based on preliminary success, the second study recommended the continuation of the program at Northgate and expansion to another school. See Appendix E for a review of the status of the recommendations from the two earlier reports.

The present study was requested by the Board of Education in order to make changes prior to the 1990/91 year. It focused on College Park High School and Northgate High School.

The present study addressed the following questions:

1. Has the project been implemented?
2. What is the impact on attendance?
3. Does the school staff support the program?
4. Do parents support the program?
5. Do students support the program?

Data Collection

The following sources of data were used:

1. Attendance data from the district's student information system. All comprehensive high schools use the district's computerized period attendance system. Teachers report absences during every period using scanner forms. Schools send this data to the district's mainframe computer via a dedicated phone line.

2. Teacher Survey. College Park and Northgate teachers completed a survey which asked for their rating of their school's attendance program (Appendix F). This same survey has been used for all three studies. Teachers at three of the four other comprehensive high schools had previously completed the survey.

3. Parent Survey. All parents of College Park students were mailed a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of the school's attendance policy (Appendix G). Each letter included a postage paid return envelope addressed to the Research and Evaluation office.

4. Interviews. The following groups were interviewed:
   - College Park All Subjects class students
   - College Park Leadership class students
   - College Park Clerical Staff
   - College Park Administrative staff (several discussions)
   - Northgate Administrative staff

Program Implementation

Northgate is in its second semester of the alternative program. Last year during its first semester, Northgate had significant problems. The decision to participate was made in January, 1989, leaving little time for involving staff and parents. The computer generated letters were not available until the sixth week of the semester. By this time, some students were already eligible for all three letters. The delay is issuing warning letters minimized the alternative program's impact for many of the target students. For these reasons, the Northgate administrative staff decided not to fail any students last year because of absences alone.

In contrast, Northgate has enjoyed an easier time this year. The computerized attendance system has worked well, although some enhancements are requested. Northgate purchased an automated phone caller which is compatible with the district computer. This enables calls to be made on the same day as the absence. All attendance problems are handled by one Vice Principal. About 10-15 students received a failing grade this year because of the policy. Importantly, the alternative program has reduced administrative time spent on attendance by an estimated one-third.

College Park's experience this year is similar to the first semester at Northgate. The decision to adopt the alternative program was made two weeks before school started. The automated phone caller was not available until October. Because of an unanticipated increase in enrollment, many changes in schedule were made during the first month of school. Some students were reported as "absent" when they were enrolled in another class. The student letters were late in coming and sometimes incorrect. The student attendance database was not accessible for eight days because of a clerical error. On another occasion, the computerized system was down for two days, all absences became truants, and letters were generated with incorrect information. (Attendance secretaries at other schools report that they did not have these problems this year.) There were inconsistencies in interpretation of the policy between the three vice principals. The 48-hour rule (maximum time allowed to clear an absence) proved especially difficult to implement. It was changed during the semester to a five-day rule.

Because of these limitations, College Park was unable to implement the alternative program. Without correct information, the program was in great difficulty.

Impact on Attendance

The best test of an attendance program is whether it helps students to get to class. The results thus far vary by school. Northgate's average absence rate per period improved from 3.6 to 3.2 absences per class this year (Table 1). The probability of these results occurring by chance is less than .001 ($x^2=115.4$, $df=3$). Despite the problems with implementation, Northgate's attendance also improved during the second semester 1988/89 from an average of 6.0 to 4.6 absences. The biggest reduction occurred in the students with 10-14 absences.

Absences at College Park increased when compared to prior years. In November, a College Park Vice Principal thought that absences could be as much as 30% higher this year because of record keeping problems. Whether these errors were corrected cannot be determined.

The district as whole has changed little over the last four years. In 1986/87, our average absence rate was 5.6; in 1989/90, the average absence rate was 5.5. After implementation, the 15-Day Policy has had no impact on attendance.

TABLE 1
First Semester
Student Absences by School
Over a Four Year Period

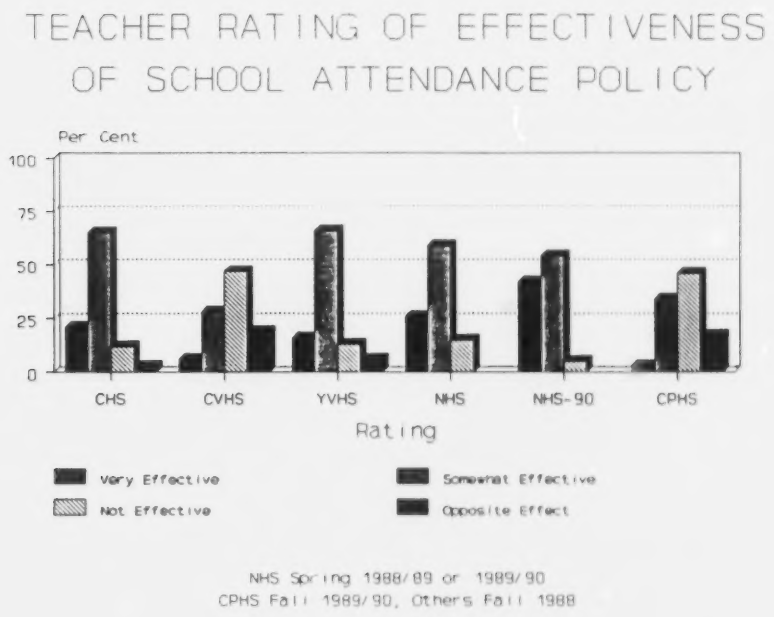
School	Year	Absences %							$\bar{X}$	N
		0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30+		
CVHS	86/87	55.1	28.3	12.5	2.5	0.9	0.3	0.4	5.2	13,175
	87/88	54.6	26.7	11.7	4.0	1.7	0.8	1.1	5.6	12,444
	88/89	57.7	27.5	11.2	1.9	0.7	0.4	0.6	4.9	10,718
	89/90	60.7	25.3	10.2	2.2	0.7	0.4	0.5	4.7	9,926
CPHS	86/87	49.4	28.1	14.1	4.5	2.0	1.0	0.9	6.2	9,125
	87/88	47.4	28.0	15.7	5.1	1.9	0.8	1.1	6.4	8,634
	88/89	52.0	27.0	13.3	3.8	2.0	0.9	1.0	6.0	8,099
	89/90	47.5	28.0	14.6	5.7	2.2	1.2	0.8	6.5	8,003
CHS	86/87	47.1	28.9	15.7	4.5	1.9	0.9	1.0	6.3	8,962
	87/88	45.8	28.8	16.3	5.4	2.5	0.6	0.6	6.4	8,279
	88/89	48.5	30.0	15.1	4.0	1.4	0.3	0.7	6.0	8,140
	89/90	47.1	30.6	15.7	3.8	1.0	0.9	0.9	6.2	7,993
MDHS	86/87	39.1	31.7	18.5	6.1	1.8	1.1	1.7	7.2	7,890
	87/88	41.5	30.5	17.7	5.8	1.6	1.0	2.0	7.1	7,687
	88/89	44.2	30.4	16.4	4.7	1.6	1.1	1.7	6.8	7,507
	89/90	43.4	29.8	16.3	5.5	2.0	1.0	2.0	7.1	7,172
NHS	86/87	67.9	23.6	6.7	1.4	0.3	0.1	0.1	3.7	8,498
	87/88	58.4	28.4	10.0	2.3	0.4	0.2	0.3	4.7	8,003
	88/89	69.2	22.3	7.2	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	3.6	7,509
	89/90	75.7	17.5	4.6	1.2	0.5	0.2	0.1	3.2	7,392
YVHS	86/87	55.2	27.2	12.4	3.0	0.9	0.5	0.8	5.3	10,358
	87/88	49.0	28.9	14.4	5.0	1.2	0.6	0.9	6.1	9,921
	88/89	53.8	27.6	13.0	3.4	1.1	0.5	0.7	5.4	9,605
	89/90	55.5	27.6	11.6	3.5	0.8	0.4	0.7	5.3	9,513
District	86/87	52.7	27.9	13.2	3.6	1.2	0.6	0.8	5.6	58,007
	87/88	49.9	28.4	13.9	4.6	1.5	0.7	1.0	6.0	54,968
	88/89	54.3	27.5	12.6	3.1	1.1	0.5	0.8	5.5	51,578
	89/90	55.2	26.5	12.1	3.6	1.2	0.7	0.8	5.5	49,999

$\bar{X}$ is the average absences per period
N is the total number of student periods

Staff Perceptions

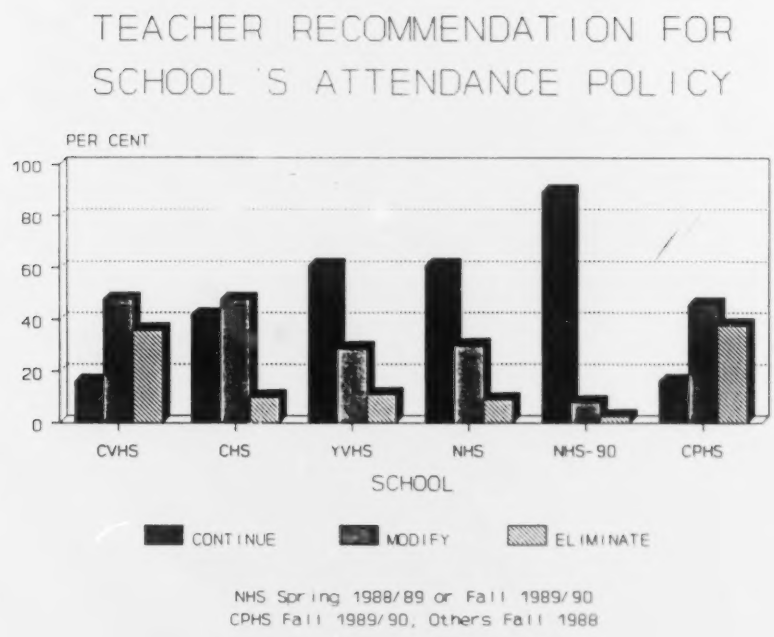
Northgate teachers are now very supportive of their attendance program. Only two of the 41 teachers responding thought the program was "not effective," and over 41% thought the program was "very effective" (Figure 2). In addition, about 90% of the Northgate teachers now think that their attendance program should be continued without change (Figure 3). In contrast, 60% of the Northgate teachers thought the program should be continued without change after the first semester it was used. See Appendix H for a complete listing of all Northgate teacher comments.

FIGURE 2



Ratings by College Park teachers were not as high. Of the 35 teachers who responded, only 13 (37%) rated the program as "effective," and only 6 (16%) wanted it continued without change (Figures 2 and 3). College Park teachers were upset with the accuracy and promptness of attendance records, thought 18-year old students abused their right to submit their own excuses for illness, and the policy has little teeth. See Appendix I for a complete listing of all College Park teacher comments.

Figure 3



NHS Spring 1988/89 or Fall 1989/90
CPHS Fall 1989/90, Others Fall 1988

Northgate administrators are pleased with their program and want it continued. They report many fewer student appeals and much less time spent on the new policy. The principal in particular spends very little time now on attendance. They believe the four-day letter now catches the "selective cutter" who cuts a different class on four different days. They monitor the frequency with which 18-year old students write their own notes, and in two cases they revoked this ability because of abuse. They report that 10-15 students received a failing grade because of attendance. They believe that they can catch fake phone calls easier than fake written notes. Northgate administrators had two suggestions: 1. create a cumulative list of students who have received computer generated letters and 2. revise the 3-day letter to read "student has been absent for one or more periods for more than three days."

"I've been through every system imaginable, this is the best system in my 24 years of education." - Northgate Vice Principal

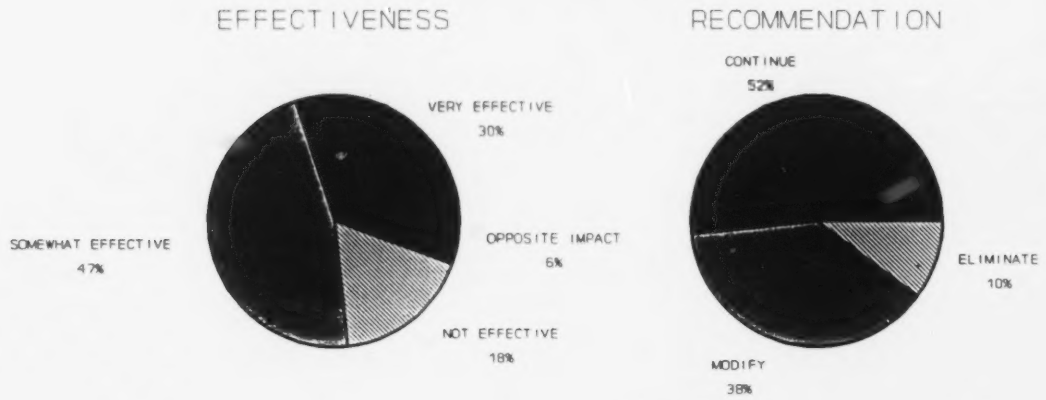
College Park administrators found that they had many more students with attendance problems than did Northgate. One Vice Principal reported that she had 70 students in one week for whom the computer had identified attendance problems. She couldn't achieve her personal goal of meeting with all students even though she only serves one-third of all College Park students. College Park counselors were not involved in student attendance problems. The administrators reported that students were sent to the continuation high school sooner under the seven-day policy. Paperwork was less for the principal but increased for everyone else. The administrators reported many problems with parents lying about student illness and abuse by 18-year old students. They suggested: 1. a consequence less severe than failure such as reduction of grade or partial credit and 2. an upper limit on total absences.

The College Park High School clerical staff were unsupportive of the new program. They reported several major computer problems. In addition to the computer difficulties, they believed that the policy was interpreted inconsistently. They reported they were spending more time on attendance but getting less done.

Parent Perceptions

A total of 303 College Park parents (about 1/4 of all parents) completed the survey. They first responded to the question: "*How effective do you think the College Park Policy is in improving attendance?*" A total of 24% (Figure 4) of the parents rated the policy as "not effective" or "had the opposite effect." Most of the parents rated the policy as "somewhat effective." Parents also answered the question "*What is your recommendation about this policy?*" Although the parents did not give high effectiveness ratings, 52% thought that the policy should be continued, and only 10% thought the policy should be eliminated (Figure 4). See Appendix J for a summary of College Park Parent written comments.

Figure 4
CPHS Parent Survey Results



Student Perceptions

Interviews were conducted with two classes at College Park: Student Leadership and All Subjects. The Leadership Class consists of students in positions of leadership such as class president. The All Subjects Class is for students who have had difficulty in a class and need an alternative setting for the remainder of the semester. A student, for example, may have earned a failing grade because of poor attendance by the end of the first quarter. The All Subjects Class allows the student to earn credit during the second quarter and gives the student a reason to come to school.

Students enrolled in the Leadership Class were supportive of the alternative program but had many suggestions. They repeated the record keeping problems reported by the school staff. They were unclear whether truants could be cleared after 48 hours or whether a failing grade because of absence could be appealed. They reported that parents lie for students to excuse cuts. They liked that the policy did not penalize them for legal absences. They also stated that the attendance office staff were very helpful in correcting data errors. When asked for their preference, leadership students overwhelmingly preferred the new, 7-Day policy. Only two of the 30+ students preferred the 15-Day Policy. In sum, Leadership students saw problems with new policy, but they thought it to be much better than the previous one.

In contrast, students in the All Subjects class preferred the 15-Day Policy by a majority of 8 to 4 (many students didn't state a preference). They reported that some of their parents would not call to clear absences when they were sick. They knew that other parents lie about illness, and they felt twice burdened. They believed that because of the new policy some students transferred sooner to the continuation high school. When asked what would have helped them to stay in class, they stated a teacher "who cares" and teaches in a way "so I won't want to cut." These students asked for teachers to be more than instructors.

CONCLUSIONS

All is not well with our current efforts to improve high school attendance. Our district average period attendance rate has remained the same for the last four years and has been remarkably unaffected by our efforts to reduced student absence. Our district's legal counsel has advised us that the current 15-Day Policy violates a student's right to make up work missed because of illness. When asked in March, 1988, only six percent of our school administrators wanted to continue the 15-Day Policy without change. Many teachers do not fail students after 15 days of absence. The policy creates mountains of paperwork in the form of early warning letters and student appeals which are approved over 90% of the time. The notification letters alone create a huge clerical demand and cost the district thousands of dollars each year in postage. Half of our schools have adopted alternative programs. The 15-Day Policy had its chance, but it did not work.

The alternative, 7-Day Policy addresses some of the ills of the current policy, but whether it will be successful in all district schools is not known. The program has worked well at Northgate. Students at this school, however, have traditionally had the fewest attendance problems in our district. Northgate had 2.0% student periods with 15 or more absences this year; the district as a whole had 6.3% student periods with 15 or more absences during the same time period. The difficulties with the computerized system at College Park prevented a fair test of the 7-Day Policy.

Students failing a course under either policy have the option of enrolling in an All Subjects Class funded through Adult Education. The governor's current budget, however, deletes funding for such courses. Absent this program, their is little reason for students to continue in school. Unless this State education budget is changed, our attendance policies could drive students out of the comprehensive high schools in increasing numbers.

"Rather than target the attendance, target the learning." - College Park Parent

Both policies have a punitive approach to student discipline. They define conditions under which students can fail; but how do we help students to succeed? How do we reclaim the disaffected, uninvolved student? What classroom strategies encourage students to attend? How do we help to improve classrooms with chronically poor student attendance? I doubt whether rigid policies specifying terms of failure can have an major impact on student attendance unless accompanied by a parallel interest in improving the vitality of the classroom. This is not to say to that we should abandon attendance policies; rather, we should not expect them to solve attendance problems by themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Eliminate the 15-Day Attendance Policy. It is ineffective, unjust, and cumbersome.

2. Adopt a new attendance policy which does not penalize students for legal absences. The 7-Day Policy works well at Northgate and should be continued at this school. Whether it will work at other schools remains to be proven. Any new policy must provide due process protections for students and flexibility for administrators. Partial credit or grade reduction should be strongly considered as penalties instead of a failing grade. Partial credit would require further study to determine for which course and under what conditions it would work. Partial credit, for example, would not be appropriate in lab courses or driver education.

   Students could make up partial credit losses in an on campus Adult Education class. Even if the governor's budget eliminates funding for the current All Subjects classes, a supplemental class for students who attend regular classes for the required number of instructional minutes would be funded.

3. Staff development in classroom strategies which promote attendance needs to be strengthened. Classes and departments with consistently poor attendance need to be targeted for special assistance. All schools should include positive attendance as part of the classroom grade.

4. All district schools should send the 4-day truant letters as required by State law.

5. The district should continue to improve the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for improving attendance such as the School Attendance Review Board.

6. Any changes in policy should not be implemented until the computer support system can give the necessary information. This is particularly critical with the forthcoming conversion to the decentralized system at the high schools. Enhancements must be made to the OSIRIS system before the 7-Day attendance system can be implemented. In addition, other enhancements such as cumulative lists of students receiving letters require additional work.

7. High school counselors should assist with student attendance problems as required by the district's Comprehensive Guidance Program.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICIES

District	Tardy Definition	Consequences	Absence Consequences	Time to Clear
Palo Alto USD	10 minutes	6: Parent letter 8: Counselor conference 10: Drop from class	Cuts per Semester 1 & 2: Phone Call 3: Letter 4: Conference 5: Drop from class No consequence for excused or other absence with parental approval	2 days
Sequoia Union HSD	10 minutes	Possible Adjustment Center	10 unexcused: possible SARB	?
Victor Valley Union HSD	30 minutes	?	18 absences per semester = loss of one credit. All absences but religious included. State truant notification	?
James Logan HS (New Haven Unified)	15 minutes = cut	4+ (1st period): Hour detention Other possible: - Driver training - Cocurricular - School Resource Team - Parking - Detention - Suspension - 10% grade reduction	All except unexcused: 1: Hour detention 2: Study hall detention 3: Parent contact 4: Driver training 5: Extracurricular 6: School Resource Team 7: SARB 8: Parking	2 days

District	Tardy Definition	Consequences	Absence Consequences	Time to Clear
John W. North HS (Riverside USD)	?	?	Unapproved: 1: Detention, parental contact 2: Saturday class 3: Conference 4: Office contact with parent 5: 2 60-minute detentions 6: 2 Saturday classes 7: SARB 8: Conference 9: 2-week loss of cocurricular and/or Saturday classes 10: 2 weeks in Remedial Attendance Program 11: Saturday class, loss of work permit/cocurricular 12: 5 day suspension, recommend expulsion	3 days
Lower Lake HS (Konocti USD)	?	?	14 per semester: No credit (includes excused and school authorized absences) Cannot transfer to continuation during same semester. Expected to attend LLHS, credit may be given if attendance improves.	?
Mendocino USD	?	?	15 excused or unexcused: No credit. Teachers may also lower grades because of tardies, unexcused or school required absences.	?

District	Tardy Definition	Consequences	Absence Consequences	Time to Clear
South Bay Union HSD	?	?	7 unexcused absences or 4 truancies per semester: remove from class	?
Simi Valley USD	?	?	Unexcused per semester: 4: Written/verbal notice 7: Fail class, dropped from class Unexcused includes any absence without prior teacher approval.	5 days
Fullerton UHSD	?	Numerous possible	Teacher may reduce grade by one-third letter for each unexcused absence per quarter	3 days
Ventura USD	?	?	5 unexcused: Possible "F"	?
Valley HS			10 unexcused per quarter: "F" (Parents notified on 5th)	

RN/lg
5/9/89

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APPENDIX B

Students

Attendance

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Each person between the ages of 6 and 16 years not exempted from school attendance is subject to compulsory full-time education. Each person subject to compulsory full-time education and each person subject to compulsory continuation education shall attend the public full-time day school, independent study program, Center for Independent Study, continuation school or classes designated by the governing board. (E.C. §48200)

Each parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of any child between the age of 6 and 16 years, not exempted under the provisions of this policy, shall send the child to the public full-time day school for the full time for which the public schools of the city, city and county, or school district in which the child lives are in session. (E.C. §48200)

Parents may be required to furnish proper medical and/or other verification of absence for continued excessive absenteeism as determined by the Principal and/or District Student Administrative Hearing Specialist. (5 C.A.C. §306 and §421)

Every teacher shall maintain a day-by-day record of each student's attendance, absences, and tardies.

Legal Reference:

Education Code

1740	Employment of Personnel to Supervise Attendance (county superintendent)
46000	Records (Attendance)
46010-46014	Absences
46100	Length of School Day
46110-46119	Attendance in Kindergarten and Elementary Schools
46140-46147	Attendance in Junior High School and High School
46500-46502	Attendance of Physically Handicapped Pupils
46510-46513	Attendance of Educationally Handicapped Pupils
48200-48231	Compulsory Education Law
48205	Absence for (Justifiable) Personal Reasons
48260-48273	Truants
48292	Filing and Prosecution of Complaint by Attendance Supervisor
48320-48324	School Attendance Review Boards

Administrative Code, Title 5

306	Explanation of Absence
420	Absences Allowable as Attendance
421	Method of Verification (of Absences)

August 1987

Students

Attendance

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Absences

1. Every teacher shall maintain a day-by-day record of each student's attendance, absences, and tardies.

2. On returning to school after being absent the student shall be permitted to return to class.

3. The administration will determine whether absences are excused or unexcused.

4. If absence from school is to be considered excused, a Principal or teacher may require a satisfactory explanation from the parent or guardian of a pupil, either in person or by written note.

5. Verification of the reason for the absences shall be made in one of the following ways:

   a. by a telephone communication with the parent or guardian
   . by a note from the parent or guardian indicating the specifics of the absence.
   c. by a visit to the student's home
   d. by a personal visit of the parent, guardian, or other responsible member of the family to the school.
   e. by any other reasonable method which establishes the reason for absences.

Excused Absences

Students receive an excused absence when they are absent from school for the following reasons:

1. Death in the immediate family (1 day in state, 3 days out-of-state)

2. Serious illness of a member of the family which necessitates the absence of the student.

3. Illness or injury of the student

4. Justifiable personal reasons, including but not limited to, an appearance in court, observance of a holiday or ceremony of his or her religion, or an employment conference, and such other absences as the Principal may consider justifiable when requested in advance.

5. Having medical, dental or optometrical services rendered (5 C.A.C. §420)

6. Jury duty.

June 1983

Students

Attendance

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Excused Absences (Cont.)

Students who plan to be absent for reasons other than the first three listed above should seek approval by presenting a note from home to the Principal or designee in charge of attendance, who will then indicate approval or disapproval. Any student shall be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed during an excused absence that can reasonably be provided, and on completion shall be given full credit. (E.C. §46015, §48205)

The teacher of any class from which a pupil has an excused absence shall determine what assignments the pupil shall make up and in what period of time the pupil shall complete such assignments. Tests and assignments may be the same as those missed, or shall be reasonably equivalent to them. (E.C. §48205)

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences are those which do not come under any of the definitions of excused absences. Students who have truant absences may be denied make-up privileges.

Tardiness to Class

Continued tardiness on the part of any student will be viewed as a very serious matter. Promptness to class is extremely important. Students are expected to be in their places, ready to work, at the bell (or other specified time). (See Truancy, below.)

Initial Classification as a Truant

Any pupil who is absent from school without valid excuse more than three days or tardy in excess of 30 minutes on each of more than three days in one school year is classified as a truant. This classification takes place after the fourth day of unexcused absence in a given year. As soon as possible, after initial classification as a truant, the school shall notify the pupil's parent or guardian by first class mail of the following:

1. That the pupil is truant;
2. That the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the pupil at school;
3. That parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be guilty of an infraction and subject to prosecution;
4. Alternative educational programs available in the district;
5. The right to meet with appropriate personnel to discuss solutions to the pupil's truancy.

The principal of each district school is responsible for the implementation of this rule.

January 1984

Students

Attendance

HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

Students who are absent from any high school class for fifteen days in a semester shall fail the class. Appeals may be made for legitimate absences.

Absences from class for the following reasons will not be included:

School Administrative Appointments
School Approved Programs or Projects
Special Testing

Students who fail a class may appeal in writing to the teacher and principal, explaining why credit should be awarded.

The intent of this policy is to call to the attention of parents and students the importance of class attendance and provide for greater student accountability for make-up work, not to punish students who are ill. The appeal process will include a statement that relates to work made up and/or plans to make up work. It will also be verified by a parent/guardian signature.

Legal Reference: Education Code
49067 Regulations Regarding Pupil's Achievement

May 1985

Students

Attendance

HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

High schools have procedures to assure that student attendance is monitored on a daily basis. They attempt to make daily calls on absences, track and follow-up on student truancies and deal with forgeries on student absence notes.

In addition to the above, the following procedures shall be followed in implementing the district's Fifteen (15) Day Attendance Policy:

1. The policy shall be discussed at local school forums, and publicized in newsletters, handbooks, school papers, etc., on an annual basis.

2. School staffs shall be oriented to their responsibilities in implementing the policy annually.

3. On the ninth absence of the semester, the teacher shall have the student sign and mail the Nine Day Absence Letter (NCR) to the parents. If the student is absent on the 10th day, his/her signature is not required on the letter [copy of letter - Rule 5114(b)].

4. On the fifteenth absence of the semester, the principal shall mail the Fifteenth Day Absence Letter (NCR) notifying the parent of the student being assigned an "F" grade in the class. The Parent/Student Appeal form will also be mailed at the same time. [copy of letter - Rule 5114(c)].

    a. No appeal shall be considered where five or more of the absences have been reported as truants.

    b. All appeals must be completed within five (5) school days after official notification that a fifteenth absence has been recorded.

    c. The school will notify the student and parent on the appeal decision within ten (10) school days after the appeal has been received.

MT. DIABLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rule
5114(b)

OFFICE OF PRINCIPAL

_____
Date

Dear Parent or Guardian:

RE: _____ _____
Student's Name Grade Level

Your son/daughter has nine (9) absences as of _____
(date)
in _____. We are concerned that
(class)
continued absences will affect his/her success in the course.

In addition, the Mt. Diablo Unified School District attendance policy requires that a grade of "F" be assigned in a class where a student has missed fifteen (15) days.

It is our hope that this can be avoided with your help, and we would appreciate any steps you might take to insure that your student's attendance is improved.

_____ _____
Student's Signature Teacher's Signature

_____No signature - student absent on 10th day.

DISTRIBUTION:

White - Parent
Yellow - Attendance Office
Pink - Other

6/24/86
#1 ATT
392

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

MT. DIABLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rule
5114(c)

OFFICE OF PRINCIPAL

Date

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I have received information from _____
Teacher or Attendance Clerk

and have verified that your son/daughter _____ Grade Level:

has missed fifteen (15) days in _____ as of:
(Class)

Under the Board of Education Policy adopted April 8, 1985, he/she shall be assigned an "F" in the class. The student has the right to continue in the course and is expected to do so by the school. The policy also provides for an appeal.

If you plan to appeal, please complete the bottom half of this form and return all copies to my office.

_____
Principal

. . . . . .

Parent/Student Appeal

TO: Principal

SUBJECT: Request for Class Credit with Fifteen or More Absences

FROM: _____ _____ _____ _____
Student's Name Date Subject Teacher

I request that credit be allowed. My absences can be explained as follows: (Attach additional comments on seperate sheet)

_____

_____

I expect to make up all missed assignments by _____

_____ _____
Student Signature Date

_____ _____
Teacher Signature Date

_____ _____
Parent Signature Date

☐ Approved
☐ Denied

Comments: _____

_____

☐ Approved
☐ Denied

_____ _____
Principal's Signature Date

No appeal shall be considered where five or more of the absences have been reported as truants. Appeal must be completed within five (5) school days after official notification that a fifteenth absence has been recorded. The school will notify the student and parent on the appeal decision within ten (10) school days after the appeal has beeen received.

White	Parent
Canary	CUM
Pink	Attendance Office

6/86

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

APPENDIX C

M E M O R A N D U M

June 9, 1986

TO: Ernest Wutzke

FROM: BILL HANSEN
FRANK M. OLIVER

RE: Fifteen Day Absence Policy

The Board Goals Committee met to evaluate the Fifteen Day Absence Policy adopted by the Board of Education and implemented during the 1985-86 school year. Following is the committee's summary report which includes data collected and reviewed, general impressions and recommendations.

DATA COLLECTED:

1. A comparison of actual student attendance for the first seven months for the 1984-85 and 1985-86 school years indicates there was an increase in attendance for the current school year except for the first month.

2. A comparison of the 4th month of apportionment attendance for the 1984-85 and 1985-86 school years shows small attendance gains in five of the six high schools.

3. Less than half of the students appealed the fifteen day notice.

4. A great majority of the appeals requested were granted.

5. Costs for forms and student mailings will exceed $10,000 for the year.

6. Principals estimate that implementing the policy has required 30 to 40 hours per week of staff time.

COMMITTEE IMPRESSIONS:

1. Faculty and parents generally approve of the policy.

2. Many seniors were taking advantage of the number of absences allowed with the policy.

3. Clerical assistance in the attendance office is not adequate to support the policy.

4. Occasionally the ten-day and fifteen-day notices arrive at the same time.

5. Many more parents are requesting permission to take their students out of school for trips.

6. Vice Principals are unable to complete other duties due to the increase workload in implementing the policy.

7. The seven-day notices were often mailed home instead of handing them to the students for delivery home.

8. Monitoring of the policy at the school site is difficult without the capability of data processing in mailing the notices home.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The policy be continued during the 1986-87 school year.

2. Each school be provided $3,000 for clerical assistance for the extra work required to implement the policy.

3. Notification be made at the ninth and fifteenth day of absence rather than the present seventh, tenth and fifteenth day policy.

4. The fifteen day letter and the appeal form be combined into one NCR triplicate form.

5. The following statement be added to the Appeal Form:

   No appeal shall be considered where five or more of the absences have been reported as truants.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bill Hansen, Principal, Northgate High School
Phil Ellsmore, Teacher, Ygnacio Valley High School
Pat Goodday, Vice Principal, Concord High School
Al Hurtado, Teacher, College Park High School
Gail Sangenitto, Teacher, Mt. Diablo High School
Pat Wheeler, Vice Principal, Clayton Valley High School

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APPENDIX D

COLLEGE PARK

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is one of the most important contributing factors for success in school. Absences from classes should be for reasons of health, for curriculum-related activities, or for unavoidable emergencies.

Students absent for the above reasons must assume responsibility for make-up work. Many teachers require notification prior to absence on test days for a student to be allowed to take a make-up test.

Following is an explanation of the various types of absences:

LEGAL:	Illness, medical or dental appointments, funeral attendance of immediate family member.
EXCUSED:	Family emergencies, other absences which are approved by parent in writing.
UNEXCUSED:	For students who were at school and left without an authorized PERMIT TO LEAVE from the Attendance Office but return with a note or phone call from parent.
ADMINISTRATIVE:	Suspension, Juvenile Hall.
* TRUANT:	Absent without approval of parent or school. Make-up work will not be permitted.

COMPUTER ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

1. Teacher records absence on scanner sheet.
2. If a student enters class late, it is his/her responsibility to contact the teacher at end of class to have the mark on the scanner sheet changed from absent to tardy.
3. Scanner sheet is collected by Attendance Office Student Aide at the beginning of the following class period.
4. Scanner sheets are run through a Scantron machine in the Attendance Office. Scantron records absences or tardies only for that one day. (It doesn't correct, add or delete previous days.)
5. An absence entered in the computer is automatically recorded as uncleared.

* MORE THAN 10 MINUTES LATE WILL EQUAL A TRUANT

6. PARENTS MUST CALL THE ATTENDANCE OFFICE BY 1 P.M. ON THE DAY OF THE ABSENCE TO VERIFY LEGAL OR EXCUSED ABSENCES. AN ANSWERING MACHINE WILL RECEIVE CALLS BETWEEN 3:30 P.M. AND 8:30 A.M. BETWEEN 8:30 A.M. AND 3:30 P.M. YOUR CALLS WILL BE RECEIVED BY AN ATTENDANCE OFFICE WORKER. NO PARENT NOTE IS NECESSARY IF A PHONE CALL HAS BEEN MADE.

7. As a general rule, no admits will be required by teachers following a student's absence; however, students who return to school from a doctor or dental appointment and enter during a class period should obtain an admit from Attendance to show the teacher.

8. Attendance clerk uses the information from phone calls to enter reason for absence into computer. If a student does not have a parent make a phone call, by 1:00 p.m. on the day of the absence, the absence is recorded as uncleared.

9. Teachers will be given a computer printout at the end of each day listing each student who was absent - illness, excused, field trip, etc. If a phone call has not reached the Attendance Office by 1 p.m. on the day of absence, the teacher's printout will show that absence as uncleared.

10. At the end of each day a computer printout is made listing all students with any uncleared absence for that day.

11. Automated phone calls are made the next night between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. to homes of students with uncleared absences.

12. If a parent does not respond to the phone call by the end of school on the day following the automated call, the absence is then converted to truant. (That gives two school days following an absence for clearance.)

13. A letter will be sent home when a student is truant one or more periods on four different days. At that point, the state declares him or her a "truant".

14. A letter will be sent home when a student has three truants in any one class. This will include a warning that seven truants will result in failure for the class.

15. A letter will be sent home when a student has seven truants in any one class. This letter will be a notification of failure for the course.

It is important for parents to clear absences promptly and for students who enter a class late to have the scanner sheet changed from absent to tardy.

MEDICAL VERIFICATION

The school may require medical verification for legal absences. tHis will be done only when absences have been excessive and when there is evidence of false reasons given for absence.

MAKE-UP WORK FOR ABSENCE

Students may request make-up work for LEGAL absences. Teachers are not required to allow make-up work for EXCUSED, UNEXCUSED, OR ADMINISTRATIVE ABSENCES, but may do so at their discretion, depending on the nature of the absence.

PRE-ARRANGED ABSENCES

Pre-arranged absences should be processed far enough in advance of the absence that the following steps may be taken:

1. Student takes parents note to Attendance Office and obtains Pre-Arranged Absence form.

2. Student takes form (with parent note attached) to each teacher.

3. Teacher writes comment regarding impact of absence on student grade and/or credit.

4. Student takes completed form home for parent signature. (Parent may conclude, after reading teacher comments, that student cannot afford to be absent.)

5. Student takes form to Mr. Arnold for his signature.

6. Completed form is left in Attendance Office so reason can be coded into the computer.

Note: Teacher signature on form does not indicate that the teacher approves or condones the absence nor does it assure that the student has the right to make up any missed work.

FORGED NOTES OR FAKE PHONE CALLS

Only parents or guardians are authorized to verify absences. The law allows enrolled students who have reached eighteen to verify absences also. The school reserves the right to require medical verification or direct parent contact in special cases.

HOME TEACHING

Students who will be absent for two weeks or less may call the school for homework assignments.

Students who are going to be absent for three or more weeks may apply for home teaching.

Contact the counseling office.

Excessive Absence Procedure

Northgate has been asked to pilot some changes in truant and excessive absence procedures. The pilot program will begin next semester - January 30.

We will still ask that parents call by noon on the day of each absence and give the reason to the Attendance Secretary 938-0900 extension 3505 or 3506. An answering machine will take messages from 3:30 p.m. until 8:30 a.m.

- Parents will still be called by a computer caller whenever there is an uncleared absence. The calls will be one day late (i.e. calls will be made on Tuesday night for Monday's uncleared absences).
- Any absences not cleared within two (2) school days will automatically be changed to truant.
- A letter will be sent home when a student is truant one or more periods on four different days. At that point, the state declares him or her a "truant".
- A letter will be sent home when a student has three truants in any one class. This will include a warning that seven truants will mean failure for the class. The total legal and excused absences as well as the number of tardies to date. A letter will be sent home when a student has seven truants in any one class. This letter will be notification of failure for the course.

These changes make it even more important for parents to clear absences promptly and for students who enter a class late to have the scanner sheet changed from absent to tardy.

Attendance is one of the most important contributing factors for success in school. Any absences should be for reasons of health or for unavoidable emergencies.

We have had some abuse of the eighteen year old's privilege to excuse his/her own absences in the past, and we anticipate even more possible abuses with the initiation of our new attendance procedures.

Effective January 30, 1989, we will not accept excuses for absence from eighteen year olds unless the parents have a letter on file in the Attendance Office requesting that we do so.

MT. DIABLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
NORTHGATE HIGH SCHOOL
California Distinguished School
425 Castle Rock Road
Walnut Creek, CA 94598-4599
(415) 938-0900

OFFICE OF PRINCIPAL

DATE

(Name)
(Address)
(City)

Dear

This is to inform you that your son/daughter (NAME) has been absent from school without valid excuse for one or more periods on more than than three days. The law now classifies him/her as a truant. The law requires that parents or guardians compel their children to be in attendance at school. Parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be guilty of an infraction of Education Code #48260 and subject to prosecution.

Please make an appointment with ( ) at school, to explore possible solutions to your child's truancy. At the conference, any alternative educational programs available to your child will be discussed.

Sincerely,

_____
(Name of School)

_____
(Telephone Number)

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

MT. DIABLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
NORTHGATE HIGH SCHOOL
425 CASTLE ROCK ROAD
WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA 94598
(415) 938-0900

OFFICE OF PRINCIPAL

DATE

TO THE PARENTS OF
(Student Name)
(Address)
(City)

Dear Parent or Guardian:

RE: (Student Name) GRADE ( )

Your son/daughter has three (3) truant absences as of (Date) in (Class - Period, Teacher's Name). I am concerned that continued absences will affect his success in the course.

In addition, the Northgate High School attendance policy requires that a grade of "F" be assigned in a class where a student has seven (7) truant absences in a semester.

It is our hope that this can be avoided with your help, and we would appreciate any steps you might take to insure that your son's/daughter's attendance is improved.

For your information, he/she also has (#) legal or excused absences and (#) tardies in this class.

Attendance is one of the most important contributing factors for success in school. Absences from school should be for reasons of health or for unavoidable emergencies.

_____
Teacher's Signature

JOANNE HAUKLAND
PRINCIPAL

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

MT. DIABLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
NORTHGATE HIGH SCHOOL
425 CASTLE ROCK ROAD
WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA 94598
(415) 938-0900

OFFICE OF PRINCIPAL

DATE

TO THE PARENTS OF
(Student Name)
(Address)
(City)

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I have received information from (Teacher's Name) and have verified that your daughter/son, (Student's Name) Grade level: ( ) has seven (7) truant absences in (Class Name) as of (date).

Under Northgate High School policy, (he/she) shall be assigned an "F" in the class and will receive NO course credit. The student has the right to continue in the course and is expected to do so by the school.

If you desire to review the attendance records, please call the attendance secretary , the student's counselor, or an administrator for an appointment.

JOANNE HAUKLAND
PRINCIPAL

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

APPENDIX E

STATUS OF PRIOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue the alternative program at Northgate. Teachers, students, administrators, and parents have all voiced support for the program. Preliminary signs are that it is working well. Some internal adjustments may help to strengthen the program.

   Status: The program was continued at Northgate.

2. Expand the program to at least one other school. Using the program at a different site would indicate how effective program would be throughout the district.

   Status: College Park implemented the program.

3. Review the 4-day truant letter. All agree the wording needs revision. Ideally, this information could be included on the 3- and/or the 7-day letters.

   Status: The 4-day letter was reworked.

4. Review the automatic caller. A DOS-based automatic caller would allow for immediate electronic transfer of students with uncleared absences. Two of our high schools have such a system now and can call on the same day of the absence. This eliminates data entry time and would make the Northgate 48-hour rule work better. A DOS-based caller would also be compatible with OSIRIS, the software which has been selected for the decentralized student system which will be used at all district high schools.

   Status: Northgate bought a DOS-based caller

1. Continue an attendance policy with severe consequences associated with excessive absences.

   Status: The 15-day policy has been continued.

2. Change School Board Policy or Rule as follows:

   2.1 Merge the requirement of declaration of truant after three days of absence with the 15-Day Attendance Policy.

   2.2 Define the limit for absences in terms of unexcused absences only.

   2.3 Allow partial credit for students who transfer to Olympic High School.

   Status: The alternative project achieves 2.1 and 2.2. Staff has agreed to 2.3.

3. Consider testing the following revisions to Board Policy.

   3.1 Try a reduced limit of permissible absences.

   3.2 Define the absence limit on a quarterly rather than a semester basis.

   3.3 Consider a Policy with progressive penalties for increasing absence.

Status: The committee considered these and several other ideas as well. They also researched attendance policies in other districts. After this review, the committee recommended that a program with a reduced limit of absences (truant only) defined on a semester basis be tried.

4. Clayton Valley High School should return to the 15-Day Attendance Policy.

   Status: Clayton Valley has returned to the 15-Day Policy.

5. Implement an automated period attendance system at all comprehensive high schools.

   Status: All comprehensive high schools used the district's period attendance system last year. Some difficulties were encountered, but overall the system worked well.

6. The following enhancements should be make to our period attendance system:

   6.1 Print the 9- and 15- day letters from the period attendance system.

   6.2 Develop the capacity to transfer data at the school site to a floppy disc for use by an automatic caller.

   6.3 Use period attendance to produce attendance system data.

   6.4 Use period attendance system data in producing the absence report on student report cards.

6.5 Add the ability to access students via their last name to the period attendance screens.

6.6 Add reports which would be useful to school administrators in monitoring the attendance/absence patterns of teachers and courses.

Status: Much progress has been made in this area. 6.1, 6.2, and 6.4 have been achieved. This has been of great value to district high schools. The Data Processing Department also developed automated letters for Northgate which listed additional student attendance data. 6.3 is pending action implementation of the decentralized student system. 6.5 has not been implemented. 6.6 has not been requested.

7. Monitor the consistency in application of the 15-Day Attendance Policy.

Status: The use of the automated system helped greatly with promoting consistency in application. This should have reduced teacher paperwork and made reporting of student absence more reliable.

8. Staff development on instructional strategies for promoting class attendance and promptness should be provided.

Status: Ygnacio Valley High School has instituted a school-wide requirement that each class give positive credit for class participation.

APPENDIX F

Administrator Opinion Survey
15-Day Attendance Policy

This year I am studying the effectiveness of our 15-day attendance policy. Your thoughts are needed. Please complete all items below and return to Research & Evaluation by March 11. Thank you.

Dick Nicoll, Director, Research & Evaluation

1. How effective do you think the 15-Day Policy is in deterring absenteeism?

   ___ very effective
   ___ somewhat effective
   ___ not at all effective
   ___ has opposite impact

2. How effective do you think the 15-Day Policy is in deterring attrition?

   ___ very effective
   ___ somewhat effective
   ___ not at all effective
   ___ has opposite impact

3. On the average, how much time per week do you spend enforcing the policy? _____ What specific activities account for most of this time? _____
   _____

4. What has been the most positive impact of this policy on your school? _____

5. What has been the most negative impact of this policy on your school? _____

6. What is your recommendation about this policy?

   ___ Continue it as is.
   ___ Modify it.
   ___ Eliminate it.

   Please give reasons for your recommendation. (If you recommend "modify," how?) _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

7. Please put any additional comments on the 15-Day Attendance Policy on the back of this sheet.

Name: _____ School: _____

APPENDIX G

PARENT SURVEY
COLLEGE PARK ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. How effective do you think the College Park Policy is in improving attendance?

   ___ very effective

   ___ somewhat effective

   ___ not at all effective

   ___ has opposite impact

2. What has been the most positive impact of this policy?

   _____

3. What has been the most negative impact of this policy?

   _____

4. What is your recommendation about this policy?

   ___ Continue it as is

   ___ Modify it

   ___ Eliminate it

   Please give reasons for your recommendation. (If you recommend "modify", how?)

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Please put any additional comments on the College Park Attendance Policy on the back of this sheet.

APPENDIX H

TEACHER SURVEY
NORTHGATE ATTENDANCE POLICY

4. What has been the most positive impact of this policy on your school?

- Getting parents aware of student conduct may improve conduct.
- Get to class.
- Come to class.
- Clear up absences.
- It is clear - students know where they stand!
- Absences are cleared by parents; parents often "cover" for their offspring.
- Reduction in absences.
- Limiting to 7 days good.
- The "U's" are cleared out quickly.
- Parents are immediately phoned, not 10 days later.
- Students correcting errors.
- Attendance in class is constant.
- Kids are getting absences cleared better.
- People are aware of the importance of attendance.
- Students and parents are aware.
- I feel it has improved attendance.
- No more playing the "Absence Game", that is being sure to use all 14 absences.
- Marginal students improve attendance.
- Fewer kids in the hall.
- More students realize "being in class" is important.
- Students are concerned about the accuracy marks.
- Students clear absences much sooner.
- Computer notifies me of 3 truancies - less work for me.

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
NORTHGATE ATTENDANCE POLICY

4. What has been the most positive impact of this policy on your school?

- Better attendance.
- Creates an acute student awareness.
- Attention to truancy.
- Parents feel importance of school.
- Reduces truancies.
- Has helped with absences.
- Students are becoming more accountable.
- Absences are cleared right away; this helps me in determining which students receive full credit, make-up tests, etc.
- Students attend better.
- Students worried about absences.
- Cleared absences.
- Communication with parents.

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
NORTHGATE ATTENDANCE POLICY

5. What has been the most negative impact of this policy on your school?

- Seniors who abuse policy and sign their own excuses.
- None, unless it would be parents teaching their children through example that it is acceptable to lie.
- Slow return of legal or truant absent from office.
- It's very hard to keep up on the count and paperwork.
- Kids not coming over 7 days earned - I have one going to CIS now and one really working on a more appropriate placement, perhaps special services.
- For many it is just another mess of paperwork without teeth.
- Once you have the "F" you give up.
- Student gets down in one class - gives up in <u>all</u> classes.
- No negative impact noted.
- None, Seniors continue to clear their own absences - more abuse.
- In all honesty, I've had little or no problems with truancy or tardy over the years.
- I'm disturbed about the failure of parents calling to clear absences.
- Seems more restrictive.
- Parents say they don't know about policy (don't read newsletter).
- Sometimes computer makes errors.

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
NORTHGATE ATTENDANCE POLICY

6. What is your recommendation about this policy? Please give reasons for your recommendation. (If you recommend "Modify", how?)

- I like the truant aspect is excellent, 7 seems, if anything to generous.
- It is too successful to modify or eliminate.
- I like students to return next day with pass instead of waiting for computer print out.
- I would like the computer to also generate the truancy and tardy count so I could be more consistent. It's difficult.
- If 7 truancies lead to F, then give F. Any responses are difficult to give without statistical analysis
- It seems to be effective.
- It sets limits for the students.
- Keeps more kids in class more of the time.
- Until student accepts responsibility, not much will change.
- For my part the attendance problem doesn't take up as much school time as before the policy.
- This system is centralized and seems to be more accurate.
- More effective policy than the previous one. Has lessened the paperwork.
- It seems to be working.
- In electives that tends to have a greater number of truancies than highly academic ones, this policy is extremely effective in reducing truancies.
- I just don't see much difference in attendance in my classes.
- Seems to work.
- It is helping.
- Appreciate daily printout - also weekly printout!! Up-to-date attendance.

APPENDIX I

TEACHER SURVEY
COLLEGE PARK ATTENDANCE POLICY

4. What has been the most positive impact of this policy on your school?

- An awareness of the importance of attendance
- None that I have seen.
- When it was working (daily printout) you could advise students of their standing in your class.
- Relatively easy on teachers.
- Students concern of failing the class with 7 truants.
- Haven't noticed any effect in SDC.
- It is easier to contact parents with this policy.
- 7 truants.
- To inform students sooner that their absences are affecting their grades.
- I think continuing on, we will eventually erase the "15 free days".
- None - All negative!!
- I'm not here long enough to judge. It Should work positively.
- Nothing positive!!
- No hassle of filling out forms; most students are in class.
- It has eliminated some hard core truant problems by eliminating the students involved.
- Students are aware of the severity of a truancy.
- Prompted students/parents to clear absences.
- Parents call in to clear absences.
- I seem to have more consistent attendance and fewer extended illnesses.
- That truancy is not acceptable.
- Perhaps students have been better about clearing absences.
- Students know that their parents will find out if they cut.

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
COLLEGE PARK ATTENDANCE POLICY

5. What has been the most negative impact of this policy on your school?

- Timing of reports make it difficult to keep track of.
- The students clear absences and have 15 or more.
- Mountains of paperwork. All teachers do not attempt to honor the policy.
- Loss of information.
- Students now see any number of legal absences as OK.
- 18 year old students excusing their absences.
- Students over 18 legalizing all absences.
- Attendance records are out of date, incomplete and unreliable. Students/parents/teachers have no confidence in the data.
- Student knows they can be absent as much as they want as long as they can get them cleared.
- Attendance is not communicated to the student or the teacher.
- Some students will have friends erase their absences as roll sheets are being collected. Also, parents will clear absences that are not legal.
- Legal absences - computer foul-up of recorded absences.
- Students don't care how many absences they have, as long as they don't get seven truants.
- To discourage students; to cause "ill will" when inaccuracies in computer records cause notification of automatic failure when a student has had legal absences.
- Allows excessive absences and truants. Sets poor example, leads to excessive missed work.
- Students pay less attention to attendance than under the 15 day policy. Now they concentrate on getting excuses for absences.
- Allows for too many truants. Allows for unlimited numbers of absences as long as they are legal: These "don't count", "don't matter etc.
- Too long before we know whether absences are legal.

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
COLLEGE PARK ATTENDANCE POLICY

5. What has been the most negative impact of this policy on your school?

- It does nothing to discourage excused absences.
- Upperclassmen take advantage of taking absences and clearing them.
- Promote parents/students lying about legal/truant so student won't fail. Changes can come several months later. 3/7 letters not very reliable.
- Less hassle in trying to verify 15 absences.
- Teacher frustration with attendance printout.
- No follow through. Parents simply call in and say it is our error.
- Teachers do not know if student cut, legal, etc. until weeks later. Also the student clear absences weeks later.
- That you can have a huge number of absences, all legal, and still pass a class.
- Students can clear absences at any time.
- Accounting process with computer terrible, not at all accurate.
- It either has no "teeth" or happens too fast for intervention.
- Many absences beyond 15 days but legal occurring.
- Many students don't seem to care.

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
COLLEGE PARK ATTENDANCE POLICY

6. What is your recommendation about this policy? Please give reasons for your recommendation. (If you recommend "modify", how?)

- Figure out a way to get accurate reports for each day more quickly. (Easier said than done, I realize.)

- More current data would be nice, but nothings perfect.

- Students over 18 cannot legalize absences. We should have written guidelines from Special Ed. on how we are to follow this policy in SDC.

- Go back to the "old" yellow slip system. Teachers had control, knew attendance accurately, could deal with tardies directly. The current system is fraught with errors. It is also too easy to make an error and too difficult to correct it.

- Two truants are more than enough, 10 absences are enough with room for severe circumstances.

- In-house system; Daily check with student; Daily and weekly report to teacher.

- Teacher should turn in their own roll sheets at the end of the day (or brunch and lunch). Ten absences, cleared or not should be a failing grade.

- I like the 7 day truant, but I'd like to see the 15 day enforced also. Students think they can have as many legal absences as they want without it affecting their grade.

- Printouts are late, not accurate, no one seems to have confidence in the system. Don't know where you really stand concerning grades when attendance counts as part of grading system, hard to keep grades up to date.

- Go back to hand recorded, non-computer attendance. This puts responsibility back on teachers. Institute other interventions besides automatic "F" for truancy such as counseling, parent/school conference, assignment to tutor, study session assistance to student etc.

- I much prefer marking a scanner to taking time to list all by name. I need faster feedback on absent clearing status and need the status unchanged from week to week after it is reported to me so that I don't need to keep changing the scores to reflect truants.

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
COLLEGE PARK ATTENDANCE POLICY

6. What is your recommendation about this policy? Please give reasons for your recommendation. (If you recommend "modify", how?)

- Students will "use" policy to its fullest. If 7 truants allowed, will think nothing of using 4 or 5. Also, a student who is absent 20 times during a quarter just isn't getting the material. Particularly in a lab class! Make-up work can be provided--But it isn't the lab or lecture missed. I see many students with 10-15 absences--If it isn't important to us (and "unlimited" doesn't seem to make it very important), it certainly isn't important to the student.

- The policy is not bad, the methods to make it function do not work well. New attendance procedures would help.

- It seems logical and fair.

- The old policy at least gave the impression that attendance was important. This does not and students report that it is very easy to cheat, friends call, etc.

- Bring the computer system onto our campus. Give teachers quick feedback. Put a "cap" on total absences. Too many "legal" absences are not desirable. Give teachers lists of absences for first quarter, especially truants! This way they can know how many are current during 2nd quarter.

- Some cap on excused absences should be included and upheld to by administration. 15 excused absences equals an F. Home teacher or homework prior to absence cases should be only exceptions.

- I believe class attendance is mandatory for learning to take place. Excessive absences set a precedent for poor attendance at the college level or at the work place. There are no "truancies" for regulating attendance in the real world. Teachers need to build an oral class participation into their grading policy. If students are absent those participation points are gone, illness or not! The grading based on student participation would be different from counting 15 days for an "F". Hopefully a participation grade is legal!!

- Partial credit based on number of legal or productive days attending class.

- Until class sizes are reduced and the opportunity for individual help increases, attrition will continue.

- Go back to 15 day absences for partial credit unless attendance can come on a more regular basis. Eliminate it.

6. What is your recommendation about this policy? Please give reasons for your recommendation. (If you recommend "modify", how?)

- We will need to continue to remind especially upperclassmen about this policy so they do not become confused and accidentally fail since earlier policy seemed more flexible with options for appeal.

- At this point, I feel the students are running the school. Teachers have no authority and little back up. Rules are changed to please the parents and students. Make a drop policy final.

- We (as teachers) need to be informed when a student has reached 7 truants. As it is we have not been informed except by the weekly printout. We sign the "3 truant letter" and keep a copy. We have no feedback on the 7 day truant letter. It was 1/3/90 that I received my first xerox of a 7 day letter, yet by the printout and by my own grade book, I have several students who have reached this!

- Truancy has increased. Students can have as many legal absences as they want.

- Build in number of legal absences toward failure or allow for partial credit.

- Attendance records are inaccurate and unreliable. Students simply change to legal or don't bother. Attendance problems develop too fast to intervene.

- 7 day truant OK but a cap on total number of absences is needed.

- Make students totally responsible for their attendance and have their grades reflect lack of attendance. If they are absent 10% of the time reduce grade by 10%.

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
COLLEGE PARK ATTENDANCE POLICY

7. Additional comments on the College Park Attendance Policy.

- I feel Lisa does a <u>great</u> job in a very difficult situation. If there is a way to correct 2 problems, it would be immensely helpful.
  1. Have daily attendance reports available sooner.
  2. Have "3 truant absences" letters out immediately after 3rd truant. Students tell me that they don't come out until a long time after the 3rd truant absence occurs.

- SDC was told by Administrators that we would have to include absenteeism as an IEP goal before we could automatically assign an "F" for absenteeism.

- Computerized attendance is ridiculous! It is inefficient, inaccurate, and unnecessarily complicated. It creates a huge paper load (a big waste). It makes work for the attendance office. The old system worked well. I have gone through computerized attendance for five years at two different schools. It has yet to work well. It serves nobody, teachers, students or attendance secretaries. It is expensive and wasteful. I have never heard a rational, sensible justification for this mess outside of the district office. Typically, those who do not have to deal with it are the ones who insist on it.

  It (computer attendance) is impersonal, possibly not legal (only 48 hours to clear an absence), and makes more work for everyone....I could go on, but I have no confidence that the information gathered in this survey will change anything.

- Part of the policy on attendance must be to impress upon the student and their parents, that punctuality and excellent attendance is an important part of life. The attendance policy should be fair, but strict. It should also be one that is district-wide. We might want to look at San Ramon Unified School District policy.

- Seems as though the parents are covering for the child, truants are changed to legal. Three day truant letters are sent to some students and not to others. I haven't seen but one seven day letter when fact is many students have seven truants.

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
COLLEGE PARK ATTENDANCE POLICY

7. Additional comments on the College Park Attendance Policy.

- I would recommend a much tougher policy. Such as that of San Ramon District:
  2 truants - NO CREDIT
  10 absences (any kind) - NO CREDIT

  If we are trying to "train" students in the belief that regular attendance is important, and it is, we should emphasize it. We don't do any favors by saying, "Be here when you feel like it", then sending them off to a job where an employer expects an employee to report to work REGULARLY and ON TIME. We are remiss in our duties! The Actual number of students who would "quit" rather than "attend on a regular basis" is, I think, small. Is our policy based on training students, or keeping ADA up at the price of a good education?

  Need exists for teacher notification when a student receives automatic failure for 7 truants.

- I have given up on making attendance a part of my grade. I let students make-up everything as it is too time consuming to try and figure out who really has a truant. Most of the time those who cut don't take the time to make up the work. Many of the students first quarter seemed to think that they only needed to be excused to pass. They forgot that work goes on every day in class. Only two students who attended class failed at the quarter. Those students will not fail at the semester.

- I think the enforcement of any policy is the most important element, more important than the terms of the policy. If any reasonably sane policy is actually enforced by all members, if loopholes and excuses are kept to a minimum, it will work. In this sense a lenient policy that was always enforced would be more effective than a tough-sounding policy that was enforced sometimes. Since we are limited by numbers and other limitations in our ability to enforce any policy, I would recommend extreme caution.

- Most of the grading that takes place in my area (P.E.) has to do with participation so grading is affected by legal or truant absences. Grading by skill tests alone would be difficult.

- I think we worry too much about "legal" absences. Can't we demand a doctor's certificate for extended and/or frequent absences, on the grounds of health-concern if nothing else?

TEACHER SURVEY CONTINUED
COLLEGE PARK ATTENDANCE POLICY

7. Additional comments on the College Park Attendance Policy.

- We need an accurate accounting of what's going on, as is, the computer spits out a 3 day letter and can't retrieve when the absences are cleared. I've had to spend a lot of time explaining what's happened to attendance to parents who are angry (usually at me) because the computer generated a letter that isn't accurate. So fix the computer program so it can deal with the changes.

- There is no policy for the 35 legal absences! We need the availability of partial credit.

APPENDIX J

College Park parents made numerous written comments and recommendations. These reflected a wide variety of concerns. The main themes are summarized below. Typical parent comments are listed for some themes. Parents with concerns tended to write the most.

- *Attendance is not a problem for my student.* Many parents wrote that their children have never had an attendance problem. These parents tended to favor the policy but others did not answer questions 1 and 4.

- *I like (dislike) the automated phone caller.* Many parents appreciated the daily phone calls made by automated caller. Others found it impersonal and ineffective. These parents commented that the student would sometimes answer the call and not inform parents, the automated caller would leave an incomplete message on the answering machine, or they couldn't determine which College Park student the message referred to. They would prefer to talk to an "adult authority."

- *I don't understand...the system.* Many parents expressed confusion regarding the 48-hour rule, whether there was an early "warning system" and how to correct record-keeping errors.

- *"The system doesn't work."* Even many of the supportive parents expressed frustration with the computerized attendance system at College Park. Considerable anger was felt by parents who erroneously received 3- and 7-day letters.

  "I cannot express how angry I get when I am notified that my son has been truant X number of times and I can prosecuted for it! Just try it!! What angers me is that my son has never missed school!!..."
  "Require validation by teacher & office prior to sending out notices."

- *Abuse of policy.* Many parents thought the policy was unfair because students had learned to beat the system. Seniors, for example, can write their own notes. In addition, students get someone other than their parent to call and clear an absence.

- *I prefer this to the 15-day policy.*

  "Last year our daughter was out of school due to a burst appendix. Following attendance procedures she failed each class until we wrote an excuse per each class to the principal asking for reinstatement."

- *Attendance should not be part of a student's grade.*

- *Treat the underlying cause of the problem, not the symptom.*

  "The high school-aged student should be held increasingly accountable for own actions. To use a threat of failure would appear to tend only compound the "underlying cause."

- Use other interventions besides a grade of F. Parents recommended Saturday school and reduction of grade.

  "After five truancies, the student should be counseled by someone who is willing to LISTEN and HELP, and has the authority to make schedule changes, etc..."

- *Seven absences is too many.*

- *I need more time to judge.*

- *Reward good attendance instead of punishing poor attendance.*

"It would be more effective to integrate attendance in the grade rather than a blanket policy. For example, more quizzes could be given with no make ups. Obviously, if a student misses a quiz, he/she will suffer the consequences. Rather than target attendance, target the learning. However, at least the current attendance policy is a step in the right direction.

- *I like the new policy.*

"My daughter loves to go to lunch with friends. This policy helps to keep her in class and out of trouble. Please continue the policy."

- *Treat tardies differently than truants.*

- "A ten minute tardy is considered to be a truant and students are not informed of their truants. If a student has a pass, but is late, and the attendance has already gone out the student is truant."